PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

LAND AT THE VINES
RIBCHESTER ROAD
RIBCHESTER
LANCASHIRE

APRIL 2026

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Land at The Vines
Ribchester Road
Ribchester
Lancashire

A report for

David Gradwell

Report by

Patrick Leatham B.Sc. (Hons.), PGCert. MCIEEM

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 REASON FOR SURVEY

PENNINE Ecological have been commissioned by David Gradwell, to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of land at The Vines, Ribchester.

The PEA has been undertaken to support an application which include the construction of a new stable building and hard standing.

The study includes the following elements:

- UK Habitat Classification Survey.
- Badger Survey and Evaluation.
- Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment.
- Breeding Bird Survey and Evaluation.
- Great Crested Newt Scoping and Evaluation.
- Riparian Mammal Scoping.
- Scoping for other protected or notable species potentially present within the site.

The study also includes a full evaluation of the ecological significance of the survey findings, and recommendations/precautions where appropriate

1.2 SITE LOCATION

The site is located at The Vines along Ribchester Road, Ribchester, PR3 3XL. The Ordnance Survey central grid reference for the site is SD 64623 35744. An aerial image of the site with the surveyed extent is shown below.

Figure 1.1: Surveyed area at The Vines, Ribchester

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The methodologies where specific surveys were applied are outlined below. The survey was undertaken on 26/03/2026.

2.1.1 Desk Based Study

The Multi Agency Geographical Information Centre www.magic.gov.uk was referred to in respect of statutory sites, priority habitats, GCN licence returns, and European Protected Species Licences (EPSL) issued in respect of GCN and bats.

It should be noted that species records over 500m of the site are not reproduced here as they are considered to have no association with the site and are beyond the sphere of influence of the proposals. Records older than 10 years are also not included, unless they have ecological significance (e.g. historic bat roost or historic presence of GCN within a pond).

In addition, Pennine Ecological's dataset was referenced which contains extensive records of species and habitats generated from surveys undertaken since the company's formation in 1996

2.1.2 UK Habitat Classification Survey

A UK Habitat Classification (UKHabs) survey (UKHab Ltd, 2023) of the habitats within the red line boundary was undertaken.

Where applicable, a habitat condition score for each of the habitats was completed (Appendix C).

2.1.3 Badger Survey

A badger survey was undertaken to identify evidence of badger utilising the site and up to 50m from the site. Surveys were undertaken in accordance with '*Surveying Badgers',* Harris et al., (1989) and '*Badger*', Roper (2010).

2.1.4 Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment and Evaluation

A daytime survey was conducted in accordance with the methodology outlined in Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edn) Collins, J. Bat Conservation Trust (2023).

There are no buildings or trees within the red line boundary.

During the survey the surrounding habitat was evaluated in relation to bats as very often roost selection is closely correlated with the surrounding habitat

2.1.5 Bird Survey and Evaluation

The site was assessed for its potential to support breeding birds. This included identifying any evidence of current or historic nesting within the site (i.e. within any buildings, trees and hedgerows).

An evaluation of the site and surrounding landscape was also completed for the site.

2.1.6 Great crested Newts

The site was assessed through a desk study and informed by the surveyor's specialist knowledge of great crested newt (GCN) ecology.

2.1.7 Riparian Mammals

The nearest watercourse is Boyces Brook which runs 20m north of the sites nearest point.

A search for evidence of both otter and water vole was undertaken 50m upstream and downstream of the site. The surveys were particularly focused on identifying holts/lay-ups and water vole burrows, as impacts from the proposals would be very localised and temporary, with no overall loss of habitat and no impacts relating to severance and wider connectivity.

The surveys also included a search for latrines (water vole), spraints (otters), feeding remains and footprints.

2.1.8 Scoping of Other Protected and Notable Species

Consideration was given to other protected and notable species potentially present within the site. The following species / species groups have been scoped out for further assessment, with reasoning provided below:

- Reptiles – There are no known records of reptiles within 500m of the site. The site comprises modified grassland as well as other urban habitats (artificial unvegetated land, hard standing). The habitats on site are of no value to reptile species and therefore reptiles are considered to be absent from the site.
- Invertebrates – The proposed development area comprises mostly modified grassland and hard standing habitats. Habitats on site are not typical of habitats which are capable of supporting notable invertebrate assemblages (Buglife, 2015). It is concluded with reasonable certainty that notable invertebrate assemblages are absent from the site.
- Other notable mammals – Whilst it is accepted that species such as brown hare and hedgehog may potentially be present, the site is not considered capable of supporting significant populations of any notable mammal species. No observations were recorded during the survey. Standard precautionary working measures would avoid impacts on individual mammals.

These species are not discussed further within this report.

2.2 SURVEYOR EXPERIENCE

The surveyor and author of this report is Luke Pilling. Luke is a Qualifying member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and has over two years' experience in ecological survey and evaluation. Key skills relating to this site include:

- Two seasons of UKHabs survey.
- Breeding bird inspections and breeding bird checks.

- Competent in preliminary bat roost assessments. Undertaken two seasons of bat emergence and transect surveys.
- One season of terrestrial mammal surveys, supported by highly experienced ecologists.

The survey findings and report has been reviewed by Patrick Leatham. Patrick is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM) and has over 13 years' experience in ecological survey and evaluation. Key skills include the following.

- Over 13 years completing Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey / UKHabs Survey on both small planning applications and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).
- Experienced bat surveyor and accredited agent on Stuart Macpherson licence (2021-10079-CL18-BAT).
- Experienced bird scoping and breeding bird check. Good knowledge of common and widespread birds.
- Extensive experience in great crested newt (GCN) survey, evaluation, licensing, and mitigation. Natural England Class Licence WML-CL08 held. Part of the Pennine Ecological survey team that undertook Great Crested Newt Surveys of over 40 ponds/slacks at Ainsdale Sand Dunes NNR/Sefton Coast SAC/SSSI for the Dynamic Dunescapes (DuneLIFE) project / Natural England.
- Extensive experience undertaking terrestrial mammal surveys including badger (accredited agent on multiple badger sett closure licences).
- Riparian corridor and mammal surveys for numerous flood alleviation schemes across north west England.
- Ecological Evaluation and Impact Assessments in association with large scale infrastructure projects.
- Experienced Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). Undertaking over 20 HRA's to assess significant effects on internationally and nationally designated sites.

2.3 SURVEY CONSTRAINTS

The survey was undertaken on 26/03/2026 which is outside of the optimal botanical survey season. However, the habitats present within the site are common and widespread and were readily identifiable. Appropriate habitat condition assessments were completed for all habitats within the survey area.

There are considered to be no survey constraints, and an appropriate evaluation of the site has been completed.

3. RESULTS

3.1 RESULTS SUMMARY

- There are no statutory designated sites within 2km of the survey area.
- There are no known non-statutory designated sites within 500m of the site.
- The survey area includes urban habitats and modified grassland.
- The habitats affected by the proposal are of 'site' value only.
- There are no known S41 species[1] associated with the site.
- The survey revealed no evidence of use of the site by badger. The site is of limited value for badgers.
- There are no buildings or trees within the survey area.
- No evidence of current or historic bird nesting was recorded on site. The site has no suitable bird nesting or foraging habitat. The site is of no value for birds.
- No evidence of riparian mammals was recorded within Boyces Brook.
- No evidence or sightings of other protected / notable species was recorded within the site.

3.2 DESK BASED STUDY

3.2.1 Statutory Designated Sites

There are no statutorily designated sites on site or within 2km of the site.

The site does lie within several Impact Risk zones from SSSIs outside of 2km from the sites central point. These statutory sites are; Red Scar and Tun Brook Woods (SSSI) and the Bowland Fells (SSSI).

3.2.2 Non-Statutory Designated Sites

There are no non-statutorily designated sites on site or within 500m of the site. The closest non-statutory site is the Buckley Wood and Dale Hey Wood Biological Heritage Site (BHS) which is located approximately 575m northwest of the site.

3.2.3 Protected and Notable Species

There are no protected or notable species records within 500m of the site. The closest is a common pipistrelle licence from 2019 located approximately 550m northeast of the site (case reference: 2019-43634-EPS-MIT).

[1] S41 Species = Section 41, Habitats and Species of Principle Importance in England (NERC Act 2006)

3.3 HABITATS

3.3.1 UKHabs Classification Survey

The following habitats were recorded within the survey area:

- u1b5 Developed land; buildings
- u1b6 Developed land; other developed land
- u1c Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface
- g4 Modified grassland

The site comprised a hard standing driveway and an artificial unvegetated access track which lead down to a small area of modified grassland. The surrounding area comprised a holiday let adjacent to Boyces Brook.

(i) Target note 1 – g4 Modified grassland

The site included a small area of modified grassland to the northeast. The grassland was highly modified and shaded by the surrounding trees. The species identified during the survey were; Yorkshire fog (D), annual meadow-grass (A), meadow buttercup (F), springy-turf moss (LA), dandelion (O), creeping thistle (R), common daisy (LO), and vetch species (R).

The grassland was assessed as being in poor habitat condition.

3.4 PROTECTED SPECIES

3.4.1 Badger

(i) Setts

The survey found no setts on site or within 50m of the site.

(ii) Foraging Signs and Pathways

No sign of badger activity was found on site or within 50m of the site. Therefore, it can be concluded that the species is not using this area for foraging or commuting.

(iii) Boundary Search

All of the boundaries of the site were walked and examined for potential runs, pathways, and latrines. The search found no evidence to suggest badger activity along any of the site boundaries.

The absence of any activity signs indicates that badgers are not entering the site. The absence of latrines indicates a lack of territorial activity in the near vicinity of the site.

3.4.2 Bats

(i) Preliminary Roost Assessment

There were no buildings or trees within the red line boundary that will be impacted by the proposals. The site has no bat roost potential.

(ii) Bat Habitat Suitability

The site comprised predominantly urban and modified habitats. Extensive woodland and scrub was situated along the banks of Boyces Brook which runs northeast of the site. These habitats will create suitable foraging opportunities for bats and provide connectivity to the wider landscape.

Overall, the habitat associated with the site is considered to be of '**moderate**' suitability for bats (refer to Figure 3.1 below).

Figure 3.1: Extract taken from Collins, BCT (2023); Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition) - Table 4.1

Table 4.1. Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats, based on the presence of habitat features within the landscape, to be applied using professional judgement.

Potential suitability	Description	
	Roosting habitats in structures	Potential flight-paths and foraging habitats
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any commuting or foraging bats at any time of the year (i.e. no habitats that provide continuous lines of shade/protection for flight-lines, or generate/shelter insect populations available to foraging bats).
Negligible[a]	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used as flight-paths or by foraging bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains in order to account for non-standard bat behaviour.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions[b] and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity and not a classic cool/stable hibernation site, but could be used by individual hibernating bats[c]).	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of bats as flight-paths such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
Moderate	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions[b] and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only, such as maternity and hibernation – the categorisation described in this table is made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for flight-paths such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
High	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions[b] and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g. maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation site.	Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by bats for flight-paths such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.

a Negligible is defined as 'so small or unimportant as to be not worth considering, insignificant'. This category may be used where there are places that a bat could roost or forage (due to one attribute) but it is unlikely that they actually would (due to another attribute).

b For example, in terms of temperature, humidity, height above ground level, light levels or levels of disturbance.

c Evidence from the Netherlands shows mass swarming events of common pipistrelle bats in the autumn followed by mass hibernation in a diverse range of building types in urban environments (Korsten *et al.*, 2016 and Jansen *et al.*, 2022). Common pipistrelle swarming has been observed in the UK (Bell, 2022 and Tomlinson, 2020) and winter hibernation of numbers of this species has been detected at Seaton Delaval Hall in Northumberland (National Trust, 2018). This phenomenon requires some research in the UK, but ecologists should be aware of the potential for larger numbers of this species to be present during the autumn and winter in prominent buildings in the landscape, urban or otherwise.

3.4.3 Birds

(i) Breeding Birds

No evidence of bird nesting was recorded during the survey.

Bird activity within the site and locally was low with the following bird species heard or seen within or adjacent to the site. Where applicable, bird species are coloured coded based on their UK conservation status[2]:

wren, robin.

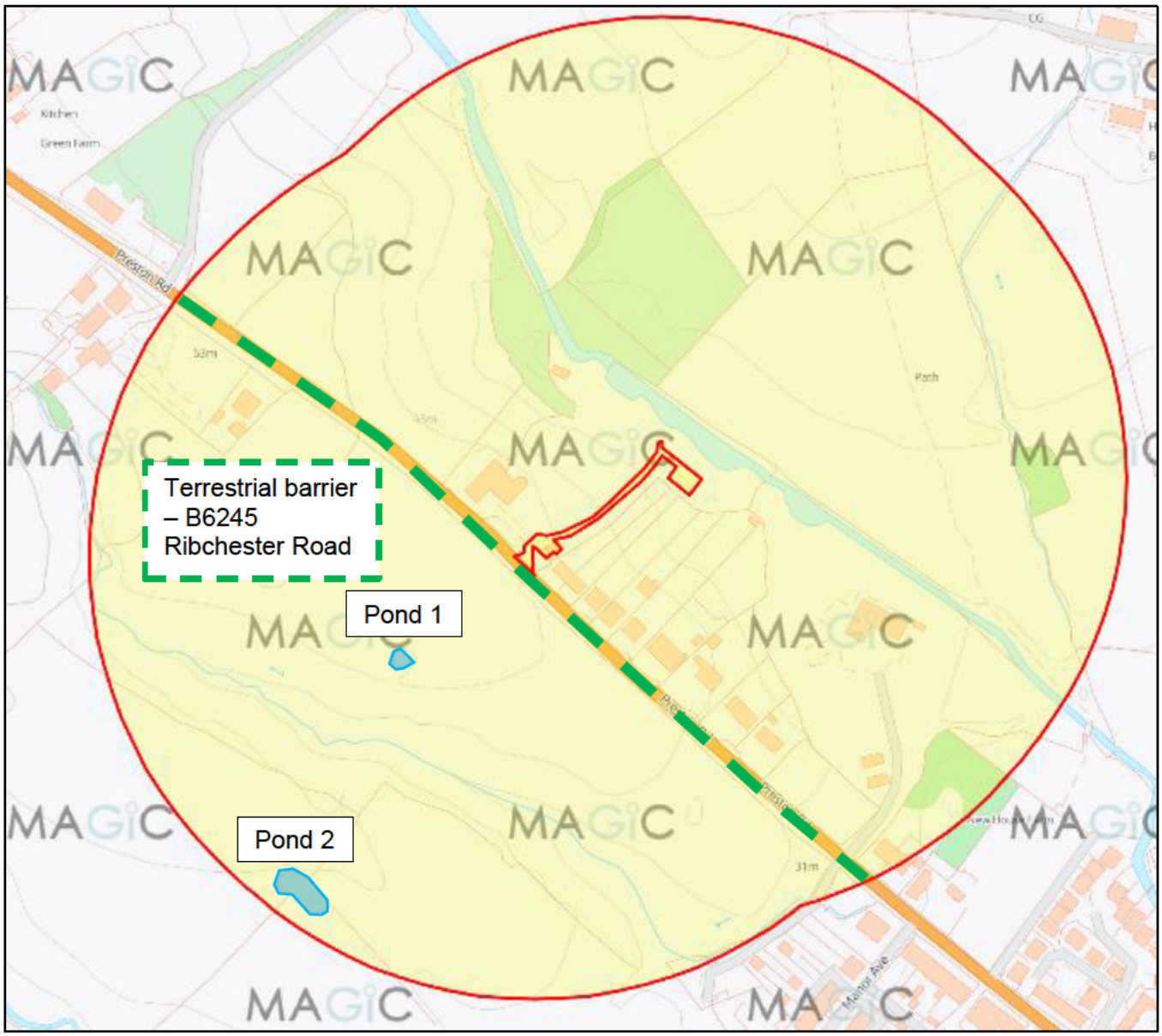
Overall, the habitat associated with the site is considered to be of 'low' suitability for birds with no trees, hedgerows or other suitable nesting habitat present within the site.

3.4.4 Great Crested Newts

There are no records of GCN within 500m of the site. The site is also beyond a terrestrial barrier preventing any connectivity between the two ponds located within 250m of the site.

[2] Birds of Conservation Concern 5 (2021) – Red, amber, green status.

Figure 2.1: Ponds within a 250m radii of the Red Line Boundary



Pond 1 is located approximately 85m southwest of the site. Pond 2 is located approximately 225m southwest of the site. Both ponds are situated on the opposite side of a main road (Ribchester Road) which will act as a terrestrial barrier. Pond 1 and 2 re also surrounded by lines of trees, hedgerows and scrub which would act as a terrestrial sponge.

It is considered highly unlikely that, should GCN be present within these ponds, individual newts would travel across the arable land and a main road (Ribchester Road) to reach the site. The site itself comprises modified grassland and urban habitat, neither of which provides suitable terrestrial habitat for GCN.

It is concluded with reasonable certainty that GCN are absent from the site and locally.

3.4.5 Riparian Mammals

Boyces Brook is a small watercourse with an average width of 9m and a water depth of approx. 60cm at its deepest through the surveyed extent. The riparian corridor is scrubby and wooded with a lot of the ground flora comprising bramble scrub and Himalayan balsam springs.

Subsequently, the brook is heavily shaded by the surrounding trees resulting in limited grass growth amongst the banks.

(a) Otter

No evidence of otter was recorded through the surveyed extent.

The section of Boyces Brook associated with the site is approximately 850m away from a larger watercourse (River Ribble). The river has depth of up to 60cm within the surveyed extent but also contains very shallow parts (approx. <10cm). These depths are prone to fluctuating and likely provide limited food sources (i.e. fish, crustaceans). The brooks water quality was assessed as moderate. Tree root systems along the banks were generally small cavities and sub-optimal for holts / lay-ups.

Overall, the watercourse was considered as suitable for commuting and foraging otter only. Breeding and resting sites are absent from the surveyed extent.

(b) Water Vole

No evidence of water vole was recorded through the surveyed extent.

The brook is considered sub-optimal for water vole as there is a lack of available food resource (i.e. grass and rushes). The dense coverage of Himalayan balsam springs and bramble scrub has inhibited the grass growth and exposed most of the banks. Whilst there may be some coverage to protect from predation, the typical grass banked habitats favoured by water vole are completely absent from the surveyed extent.

Overall, the watercourse was considered sub-optimal for water vole and are considered absent from the surveyed extent.

4. ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION

The following section discusses the significance of the survey findings. It should be noted that this part of the evaluation relates to habitats and species and includes reference to the following statutory/non-statutory instruments.

- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and later amendments), with particular reference to protected species listed in Schedules 1, 5 and 8 of the above act.
- Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019.
- Section 41 Habitats and Species of Principal Importance in England. Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.
- Reference to any relevant Red Data List/Book species and Nationally Scarce species not covered by the above or any other lists / schedules of species rarity or importance.

The evaluation is based on the commissioned surveys and desk study only.

The following statements are relevant in respect of the above.

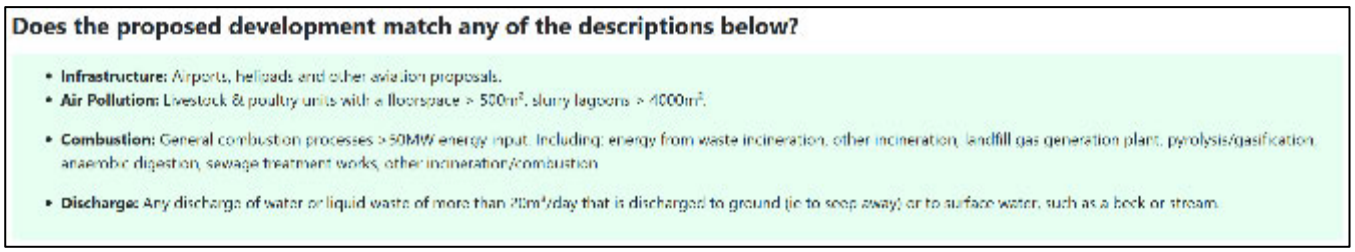
4.1 DESK STUDY

4.1.1 Statutory Sites

There are no internationally or nationally statutory designated sites within the site or 2km of the site boundary.

The site does lie within several Impact Risk Zones. The Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zones (IRZ's) has been reviewed (see Figure 4.1 below).

Figure 4.1: IRZ summary for proposal site



As the application does not meet any of the descriptions above, consultation with Natural England is not required for this application.

4.1.2 Biological Heritage Sites / Non-statutory Sites

There are no known non-statutory designated sites within 500m of the site.

4.1.3 Section 41 NERC Act 2006 Habitats and Species

There are no confirmed S41 habitats or species within the survey area.

4.1.4 Nationally Scarce/County Red Data List Species

There are no Nationally Scarce/County Red Data list plant species on the site

4.2 HABITATS

The existing habitats on site are of very low to low distinctiveness (in accordance with the BNG metric calculation tool).

The proposals include the loss of areas of g4 (modified grassland).

Based on the size and condition of the habitats on site, the value of the current sites habitats cannot exceed 'site' ecological value.

Due to the scale and nature of the proposals, impacts are not anticipated beyond the land directly affected by the proposals.

4.3 PROTECTED SPECIES

4.3.1 Badger

No evidence of badger activity was found within the site or the wider area during the survey.

It is concluded that badger are absent on site and locally.

4.3.2 Bats

There are no buildings or trees on site which are impacted by the proposals.

The sites habitats are considered to be of ‘low’ suitability for bats.

Based on the size of the site and habitats present within the site, the value of the site for bats does not exceed 'site' ecological value.

Due to the scale and nature of the proposals, impacts to bats are not anticipated to extend beyond the land directly affected by the proposals.

4.3.3 Birds

(i) Breeding Birds

No evidence of current or historic bird nesting was recorded on site. The site has no suitable bird nesting habitat and is considered to be of no value to breeding birds.

Based on the sites size and habitats present, the value of the site for breeding birds does not exceed ‘site’ ecological value.

Due to the scale and nature of the proposals, impacts are not anticipated to extend beyond the land directly affected by the proposals.

4.3.4 Great Crested Newt

No evidence of GCN was found within the site, and the nearest ponds (located approximately 85m and 225m to the southwest) are considered unlikely to support connectivity to the site due

to the presence of a terrestrial barrier (Ribchester Road) and the site comprising unsuitable habitats.

Based on the habitats present within the site (modified grassland and urban areas) and the surrounding landscape, the value of the site for GCN does not exceed 'site' ecological value.

It is concluded that GCN are absent from the site and locally.

4.3.5 Riparian Mammals

(i) Otter

No evidence of otter was found within the site or within 50 m upstream or downstream along Boyces Brook within the survey area.

The brook may be used for commuting and foraging by otter but is not capable of supporting any breeding or resting sites.

The proposals will not directly or indirectly affect the riparian corridor and impacts to otter are not anticipated to extend beyond the land directly affected by the proposals.

(ii) Water Vole

No evidence of water vole was found within the site or within 50 m upstream or downstream along Boyces Brook within the survey area.

Due to the lack of food sources amongst the banks of the watercourse, the brook is considered sub-optimal for water vole and are therefore considered absent from the surveyed section.

As the proposals will not directly or indirectly affect the riparian corridor, impacts to water vole are not anticipated to extend beyond the land directly affected by the proposals.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section outlines any mitigation or precautions required in respect of the survey findings.

5.1 DESK STUDY

5.1.1 Statutory Sites

No further assessments or precautions are required.

5.1.2 Non-Statutory Sites

No further assessments or precautions are required.

5.2 HABITATS

Appropriate habitat enhancement and creation measures will be required to compensate the loss of any habitat which is of low distinctiveness or higher. The compensation measures will need to ensure there is a measurable 10% net gain overall.

It is recommended that a Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation is completed to support this application due to the anticipated loss of modified grassland (low distinctiveness).

The metric will need to consider impacts on all habitats of low distinctiveness or above.

5.3 PROTECTED SPECIES

5.3.1 Badger

There are no requirements for any further surveys or assessment.

5.3.2 Bats

There are no requirements for any further surveys or assessment. In order to maintain the lighting levels as best as possible, the following is recommended;

In all cases illumination of peripheral boundary areas should be avoided. Where lighting is required, this must be low level, low intensity and directed downwards away from boundaries. The following principles will apply;

- Where and if lighting is required, this will be directed internally within the site avoiding spillage towards boundary habitats.
- The use of low powered sodium lights or similar will be used and these will be fitted with cowls / covers that prevent lateral light spillage towards boundary habitats.
- Wherever possible and only if required low level (1-1.5m high) bollard lighting will be used.
- If required lights will be fitted with timer controls that minimise the duration of lighting.

Lighting requirements will follow guidance provided by the Bat Conservation Trust; links are provided below.

- Bat Conservation Trust's Artificial Lighting Guidance. Webpage link https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/lighting
- Bat Conservation Trust and Institute of Lighting Professionals Guidance Note 08/23: Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK. Webpage link https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/

5.3.3 Birds

(i) Breeding Birds

There are no requirements for further surveys or assessment.

5.3.4 Great Crested Newts

There are no requirements for any further surveys or assessment.

5.3.5 Riparian Mammals

There are no requirements for any further surveys or assessment.

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LERN Environment Information Map - https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/d429aa6435b849838af1d2cef68de43b/ Latest access 09/04/2026

Natural England – MAGIC. Accessed various dates. http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/MagicMap.aspx Latest access 09/04/2026

Appendix A: UKHabs Map

Site Ref:
Land at The Vines, Preston Road, Ribchester

Figure 1:
Baseline UKHabs Map

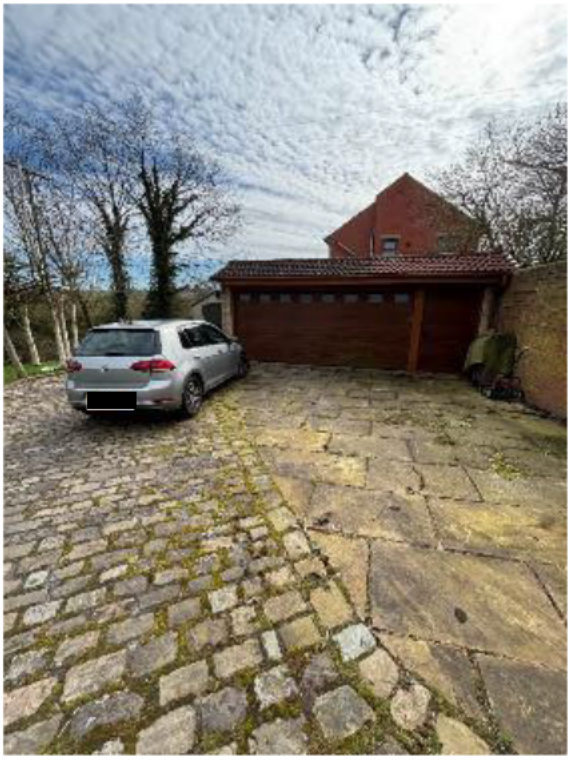
PENNINE ecological

Client:	**Study Date:**	**Scale:**
David Gradwell	26/03/2026	1:350

UKHabs Map Symbology:

- u1b – Developed land; sealed surface
- u1c – Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface
- g4 – Modified grassland
- Survey Area

Appendix B – Photographs



Photograph 1: View of the adjacent driveway within the southern area of the site. Buildings outside the red line boundary.

Photograph 2: View of the access track leading to the development area.

Photograph 3: View of the access track leading to the development area.

Photograph 4: View of the area of modified grassland in the northern area of the site.

Photograph 5: View of Boyces Brook north of the site.

Photograph 6: View downstream of Boyces Brook north of the site.

Photograph 7: View of Boyces Brook north of the site.

Photograph 8: View upstream of Boyces Brook north of the site.

Appendix C – Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets

Provided as separate excel file